

THE RURAL DISTRICT
of
SAFFRON WALDEN
in the
Administrative County of Essex

THE
ANNUAL
REPORT

of the
Medical Officer of Health

for the year

1947

PREFACE

TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SAFFRON WALDEN RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

I have the honour to submit the Annual Report for the year 1947.

The Registrar General's estimate of the population was 16,500; an increase of 530 as compared with his estimate for the previous year, and an increase of 710 on the estimate for 1939.

During the period between 1939 and 1947, the number of inhabited houses had increased from 4,890 to 5,047. The Birth Rate continued to rise and in 1947 it was approximately 50 per cent. higher than the average in pre-war years, while the Death Rate of infants under one year of age was only 26.8; the corresponding rate for England and Wales for the year was 41.0.

Ten cases of Infantile Paralysis, one of them fatal, occurred during the general prevalence of this disease. Apart from this, the number of infectious diseases notified during the year was lower than that for the two previous years. With regard to the commoner infections the comparative figures for the years 1946 and 1947 were:—

	1946	1947
Measles	175	140
Whooping Cough	37	24
Scarletina	23	11

For the fourth year in succession no cases of Diphtheria were notified in the District.

During the year a comprehensive sewerage scheme for the Whole District was prepared by the Consulting Engineers engaged by the Council. The North-West Essex Planning Committee urged that a saving could be made in drainage and other public services, if building were restricted to certain defined zones, but the Council took the view that houses were needed in every parish. This policy had the support of the Essex War Agricultural Committee.

Proposals formulated by Local Health Authorities for carrying out their duties under Part III of the National Health Service Act, 1946, were submitted to District Authorities as required by the terms of the Act. The latter were to be relieved of their responsibilities in connection with the provision of an ambulance service, and the immunisation of children against diphtheria.

In the Saffron Walden Rural District, the opening of a Commercial Airport at Stansted presented a responsibility of considerable importance for a district of limited rateable possibilities. Under Aircraft Regulations, 1938 the Local Council is the Authority responsible for all arrangements relating to the medical supervision of persons arriving from abroad. Even in early stages of development the essentials of any reliable scheme for carrying out these duties are formidable.

S. R. RICHARDSON,

Medical Officer of Health



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STATISTICS OF THE AREA FOR THE YEAR 1947

Area: 78,585 Acres.

Population (Registrar General's estimate): 16,500.

Number of inhabited houses (December, 1947) according to rate books:
5,047.

Rateable value: £69,325. Product of a penny rate: £288.

VITAL STATISTICS

			Male	Female	Total
LIVE BIRTHS	{ Legitimate	...	149	127	276
	{ Illegitimate	...	13	9	22
STILL BIRTHS	...	...	4	4	8
DEATHS	...	...	118	105	223

Birth Rate per 1,000 of the estimated population: 18.0

Death Rate per 1,000 of the estimated population: 13.5

Deaths from Puerperal causes: None.

Deaths of infants under one year: 8

Death Rate of infants under one year per 1,000 births: 26.84.

Death Rate of infants under one year in England and Wales for the year 1947 was 41 per 1,000 births.

There were no deaths from the infectious diseases Measles and Whooping Cough, and no deaths of infants under two years of age from Diarrhoea.

Deaths from Cancer were 32, and there was no excessive mortality from any particular disease during the year.

An analysis of the deaths at various ages shows that more than half were of persons aged 75 years or over. The death rate of these was particularly high in the first quarter of the year.

GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICERS OF THE AUTHORITY: —

Medical Officer of Health: —

S. R. RICHARDSON, B.A., M.D., D.P.H.

Senior Sanitary Inspector: —

A. ARMES, M.R.SAN.I., M.S.I.A., CERT. R.S.I. as Inspector of Meat and Foods.

Sanitary Inspector: —

G. E. HAWTHORN, M.S.I.A.

Hospitals—The number of patients admitted to the Isolation Hospital during the year was 48. Of these 28 were from the Rural District.

Nursing Clinics and Treatment Centres.—There was no alteration in the arrangements for these services during the year.

Ambulance Facilities—Two ambulances were provided jointly by the two Local Authorities, but one of these had deteriorated during the war years and was used only when the newer vehicle was not available. A whole-time ambulance officer was appointed, and as far as possible, arrangements were made to provide part-time assistance, but it was often found difficult to obtain such assistance on short notice. A third ambulance, provided by the Essex County Council at St. James' Hospital, was used chiefly for the conveyance of maternity cases admitted to the Hospital.

Section 27 of the National Health Act, 1946, provided for the repeal, after the appointed day, of the powers conferred on District Councils by Section 197 of the Public Health Act, 1936, and laid on Local Health Authorities the duty of providing all future ambulance services; the proposed service to include the employment of "sitting-case" cars in addition to ambulances.

The lack of an associated car service has been a very serious disadvantage in post-war conditions, and for the proper administration of the National Health Act a reliable car service is essential.

Water—There was no extension of mains during the year. A scheme for extension in various outlying parts of the district was prepared, and a Public Local Inquiry was held which was attended by a number of persons interested—many of whom had made application for a piped supply some years previously. Approval of this scheme is still awaited.

Chemical and bacteriological analyses of all the water supplies showed the water to be of a high standard of organic quality and bacterial purity. The hardness present is not regarded as excessive in a wholesome supply suitable for drinking and domestic purposes. Samples taken from the Southern supply during the year contained only a minute trace of iron. Before the provision of a filtration plant there had been some excess of iron.

Drainage and Sewerage.—Messrs D. Balfour & Sons, the Consulting Engineers engaged to prepare a comprehensive sewerage scheme for the whole of the District, presented their Report. The estimated cost was £300,000. Application was made to the Ministry of Health and to the Essex County Council for approval, and for grant in respect of the scheme in accordance with the Rural Water Supplies and Sewerage Act, 1944, which empowered the Minister to assist schemes for the provision of sewerage facilities where water supplies had already been provided in rural areas.

The resumed negotiations with the Saffron Walden Borough Council for the inclusion of Littlebury and the Chesterford parishes in their scheme for new Works at Stumps Cross were continued.

Housing.—Owing to the interminable difficulties which continued to delay the progress of the Council's housing programme, it was decided to form a Publicity Committee which should prepare reports on the Council's activities from time to time. Several of these were issued during the year, and were particularly helpful in keeping the public informed of developments, and in explaining the reasons for recurring delays and disappointments. For, despite strenuous and sustained efforts on the part of the Housing Committee, progress throughout the year was very slow. Adverse and ill-informed criticism was inevitable, and only authentic information could counteract its effects.

In selecting tenants for new houses, it was decided that each application should be considered on its merits and with due regard to the Council's obligation to abate gross overcrowding.

Prevalence of and Control over Infectious Diseases.—During the general prevalence of Acute Poliomyelitis, ten cases were notified in the Saffron Walden Rural District. The dates, on which these cases were notified, and the parishes in which they occurred were as follows:—

Female, aged 21 years, Widdington, 23rd August.

Male, aged 7 years, Ashdon, 26th August.

Male, aged 8 years, Great Chesterford, 12th September.

Male, aged 11 years, Arkesden, 16th September.

Male, aged 13 years, Little Chesterford, 11th October.

Male, aged 13 years, Manuden, 11th October.

Female, aged 43 years, Hempstead, 15th October.

Female, aged 17 years, Great Chesterford, 23rd October.

Female, aged 37 years, Stansted, 3rd November.

The tenth case was a male, aged 50 years, who developed slight paralysis in November but had not been seen by a doctor until then. He had been indisposed on the 19th October, but continued to work.

The other nine patients were admitted to the Cambridge Infectious Diseases Hospital. The female patient, aged 43 years, died. Four of the others required orthopædic treatment, and were transferred to White Lodge Hospital, Newmarket. The remaining five recovered within two or three weeks.

An exhaustive investigation failed to reveal a possible connection between any two of the cases.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES (OTHER THAN TUBERCULOSIS) DURING 1947.

<i>Disease</i>						<i>Number of cases notified</i>
Measles	...	...	...	...	...	140
Whooping Cough	...	...	...	...	...	24
Scarlet Fever	...	...	...	...	...	11
Pneumonia	...	...	...	...	...	4
Acute Poliomyelitis	...	...	...	...	...	10
Erysipelas	...	...	...	...	...	2
Meningitis	...	...	...	...	...	1
Paratyphoid C.	...	...	...	...	...	1
Puerperal Pyrexia	...	...	...	...	...	1

Diphtheria Immunisation.—During the year 355 children were immunised by the Medical Officer of Health. There were no records to indicate how many were immunised by private doctors.

A number of contacts of smallpox cases which had occurred on vessels arriving at various ports were followed up. No contacts arriving at the Airports were notified.

In view of the Council's responsibility regarding the medical supervision of persons arriving from abroad at the Stansted Airport, a Conference was held at the Ministry of Health Offices, where it was agreed that at the existing stage of development of the Airport it would be unnecessary to provide medical receptionists, and arrangements need not include more than essentials which could be expected to deal adequately with cases of infectious disease and contacts coming from an infected airport. The most difficult problem being the arrangements for having on call a doctor who has had experience of tropical infections.

Provisional arrangements were approved by the Ministry of Health.

TUBERCULOSIS

Age Period	NEW CASES				DEATHS			
	Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary		Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Under 1 year ...								
1 to 5 years ...								
5 to 15 years ...			2					
15 to 25 years ...	8	1		1	1	1		1
25 to 35 years ...	2			1				1
35 to 45 years ...	3	1			1	1		
45 to 55 years ...								
55 to 65 years ...	1				1			
65 upwards ...	1				1			

Of the 21 cases notified, 10 were not normally resident in the District, and 3 were ex-Servicemen who were not in the District at the time of notification.

SENIOR SANITARY INSPECTOR'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1947

TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SAFFRON WALDEN RURAL
DISTRICT COUNCIL.

I have pleasure in submitting my Annual Report for the year 1947.
SANITARY INSPECTION OF THE DISTRICT.

Inspections made during the year totalled 4,029 and details as to the
nature of these inspections are given below:—

TABLE 1.

Housing Inspections and Revisits (not including Rural Housing Survey)	498
Inspections re Unsatisfactory Housing Accommodation, Overcrowding, etc.	26
Inspections in connection with Tenancy Allocations, etc.	302
Inspections in connection with Rural Housing Survey ...	1,609
Inspections in connection with Public Health Nuisances	82
Inspections of premises infested with vermin, etc. ...	73
Visits in connection with Infectious Diseases ...	70
Premises Disinfected after Infectious Diseases ...	23
Visits in connection with Rodent Destruction (not includ- ing Operator's visits)	28
Inspections of Cowsheds and Dairies	136
Inspections of Bakehouses	27
Inspections of Slaughterhouses	16
Inspections of Food Premises, Shops, etc.	24
Inspections of Factories	26
Inspections of Premises in connection with Ice-cream ...	15
Investigations into proposed drainage systems ...	72
Inspections in connection with defective drainage ...	117
Number of new drainage systems water tested ...	63
Inspections in connection with Refuse and Night Soil Collection and Salvage	154
Inspections in connection with Water Supplies ...	169
Number of water samples collected (not including main supplies)	15
Inspections in connection with Moveable Dwellings ...	43
Inspections in connection with proposed Requisitioning	116
Visits to Requisitioned Properties	233
Visits in connection with Public Health (Aircraft) Regulations	34
Miscellaneous Visits	68

INSPECTION OF FACTORIES

Details of the Inspections made under the Factories Act, 1937, are given in the following tables:—

1. INSPECTIONS FOR PURPOSES OF PROVISIONS AS TO HEALTH.

PREMISES (1)	M/C line No. (2)	Number on Register (3)	Number of Inspections (4)	Number of Written Notices (5)	Occupiers Prosec- uted (6)	M/C line No. (7)
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, & 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities ...	1	33	26			1
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority...	2	57	20	4		2
(iii) Other Premises in which Section 7 is enforced by Local Authority (excluding outworkers' premises) ...	3	10	7	1		3
TOTAL		100	53	5		

2. CASES IN WHICH DEFECTS WERE FOUND

PARTICULARS (1)	M/C line (2)	NUMBER OF CASES, IN WHICH DEFECTS WERE FOUND				Number of cases in which Prosecutions were instituted (7)	M/C line (8)
		Found (3)	Remedied (4)	Referred to H.M. Inspector (5)	Referred by H.M. Inspector (6)		
Want of cleanliness (S.1)	4						4
Unreasonable temperature							
Overcrowding (S.2) ...	5						5
(S.3) ...	6						6
Inadequate ventilation (S.4)	7						7
Ineffective drainage of floors ...	8						8
Sanitary Conveniences (S.7)							
(a) Insufficient ...	9		2		1		9
(b) Unsuitable or defective ...	10				2		10
(c) Not separate for sexes	11						11
Other offences against the Act (not including offences relating to Outwork) ...	12						12
	60		2		3		60

HOUSING.

The shortage of building labour and materials in the District and the concentration of building resources upon new house construction continues to affect the older property in the Area. Action however was taken in all cases where inspection revealed that repairs were necessary to make premises reasonably habitable, resulting in 72 Preliminary Notices being served upon owners. 58 of these notices were complied with by the end of the year and credit is due to builders who despite the many calls on their services gave early attention to owners' instructions to comply with notices. 3 Statutory Notices were served, 2 of which were complied with by owners, and in 1 case the Council carried out the necessary work in default.

Little could be done to abate cases of overcrowding, mainly caused by the occupation of cottages by more than one family, although the erection of 45 prefabricated bungalows and 6 Swedish type houses, together with the conversion of 11 ex-army hutments helped to alleviate the problem in several parishes.

The number of Housing Applications investigated during the year totalled 237.

In accordance with the Council's instructions every effort was made to ensure that all potential housing accommodation was put to proper use and the results of the work in connection with the delegated Requisitioning powers were as follows:—

Vacant properties investigated	...	...	...	50
Number considered unsuitable for occupation	...			5
Number occupied following preliminary action	...			37
Number occupied following service of Requisitioning Notices	...	...	...	5
Number Requisitioned	...	...	...	1
Number converted by owners after advice				2
Number of properties under Requisition at end of year	...			42
Number of families in Requisitioned properties at end of year	...	...	...	44
Number of visits made in connection with Requisitioning action	...	...	...	118
Number of visits made in connection with maintenance of Requisitioned properties	...	...	...	223

One technical assistant was occupied practically full time upon inspection of properties in connection with the Rural Housing Survey, and at the end of the year 28 parishes had been surveyed and 3,761 houses inspected and recorded.

WATER SUPPLIES.

Action taken in 12 cases where supplies were found to be unsatisfactory resulted in the premises being provided with a main supply by the owners. In 2 cases however where main water was not available the Council undertook the carting of water to roadside tanks.

In one case where a private supply involving 70 properties was found to be polluted a Statutory Notice was served, following which the owners installed an entirely new borehole and headworks resulting in a satisfactory supply of water being provided.

In connection with the Public Inquiry held by the Ministry of Health regarding the Council's Application to extend main supplies to outlying premises in eight parishes, evidence was given as to the unsatisfactory sources of water available to the properties involved. It is to be regretted that despite the hardship caused to the occupiers, approval to the scheme has not been received to date.

Information provided by the Council's Water Engineer indicates that the main water supplies of the District have been satisfactory as regards quality and quantity apart from the lack of storage capacity in the Southern and Eastern areas.

The 10 Bacteriological and 25 Chemical examinations of treated water going into supply and 2 Bacteriological and 5 Chemical samples of raw water all showed satisfactory results and indicated that the waters are not liable to have plumbo-solvent action.

SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE

In view of the difficulties arising at the Newport and Stansted Sewerage Works due to the condition of the pumping machinery the Council, upon the recommendation of the Surveyor, decided to replace the pumps as soon as these can be supplied by the makers.

During the year 72 plans submitted in respect of installation of cesspool drainage were examined and recommendations made. Where the subsoil proved suitable the installation of a standard septic tank and filter was accepted in lieu of a watertight cesspool. A number of enquiries were received regarding the emptying of septic tanks and cesspools, and with the increasing number of such installations the provision of a cesspool emptying plant may become necessary in the future.

46 Preliminary Notices in respect of defective drainage were issued—38 of these being complied with by the end of the year. In addition one Statutory Notice was issued and the work carried out within the time limit.

PUBLIC CLEANSING.

Refuse Collection was continued during the year by private contractors with fortnightly collections in the parishes of Stansted, Newport, Great Chesterford and Littlebury, and monthly collections in the remainder of the District. With the expiry of the contract for the Northern half of the District it was possible to bring the specification for collection in line with that of the Southern area. As a result the whole district is served by covered refuse vehicles and all household refuse is collected. It is to be hoped that, with an improvement in supplies, premises will be provided with proper galvanised refuse receptacles to replace the many insanitary containers tolerated during the war years.

Weekly collection of night soil in the parishes of Great Chesterford, Littlebury, and part of Newport, continued during the year, the work being carried out by private contract. Several requests were received asking for extension of the service to other parts of the District but in view of the fact that a comprehensive sewerage scheme was under consideration the Council decided not to provide a collection service in other parishes.

SALVAGE.

Figures relating to salvage collection during 1947 and the previous year are as follows:—

			1947			1946		
			Tons	cwts.	qrs.	Tons	cwts.	qrs.
Waste Paper	...	...	51	14	0	43	0	0
Bones	...	...	1	16	0	4	1	0
Rags	...	...	0	12	0	1	5	0
Bottles and Jars	...	...	7	12	0	3	7	2
Metals	...	...	7	0	2	25	9	2
Miscellaneous	...	...	0	0	0	2	10	0

Total for the year: 1947, £444 11s. 10d. 1946, £437 12s. 4d. (including bonus paid by Ministry of Supply).

Unfortunately it is obvious that from many houses little waste paper is collected and it is to be hoped that, with the frequent publicity campaigns now conducted, every householder will adopt the habit of placing all waste paper in a separate receptacle and so help to close the wide gap between paper issued and that returned for salvage.

INSPECTION OF FOOD AND FOOD PREMISES

COWSHEDS AND DAIRIES.

Routine inspection of cowsheds and dairies, involving 136 visits, was continued and of 11 notices issued under the Milk and Dairies Order 10 had been carried out by the end of the year. It is noticeable that with the growing demand for milk of a definite standard many producers are anxious to obtain "Tuberculin Tested" licences, and in co-operation with the County Health Inspector advisory visits were paid to 21 such producers. By December, 1947, four new or converted milking parlours and dairy premises were completed and in thirteen other cases the work required had been commenced.

The 17 Tuberculin Tested producers and 14 Accredited producers were sampled regularly by the Essex County Council staff with whom close liason was maintained in connection with the supervision of these premises.

FOOD INSPECTION.

All Bakehouses, food preparation premises, butchers' shops and slaughterhouses were regularly inspected. Of 27 pigs slaughtered under Ministry of Food licences 3 were found to be affected with localised tuberculosis.

Eight preliminary notices served in respect of necessary limewashing and cleansing of bakehouses were complied with but repeated advice had to be given regarding the standard of hygiene necessary in cafes, restaurants, etc.

It is obvious that too little attention is given to such important matters as washing crockery and cutlery and regular hand washing, and it is hoped that some form of lectures to kitchen staffs may be organised as suggested at the recent Food and Drink Hygiene Conference. During the year 3 notices were issued calling for proper sanitary conveniences at restaurants.

Fifteen visits were paid in connection with ice-cream legislation but almost all ice-cream retailed in the District is pre-wrapped by the manufacturers.

One outbreak of mild food poisoning involving a small number of people in two parishes occurred during the year, but investigations carried out indicated that the affected food was manufactured in the area of another authority who took prompt action.

Foodstuffs surrendered after being found to be unfit for human consumption were as follows: —

Beef	61½ lbs	Gaiantine	1 tin
Pork	27 lbs	Grapefruit	3 tins
Skinless Rabbits	60 lbs.	Pilchards	9 tins
Fish	8 stones	Tomatoes	2 tins
Sugar	1¼ cwt.	Stew	6 tins
Margarine	4 lbs.	Baked Beans	38 tins
Cereals	29 packets	Peas	4 tins
Haslett	11 lbs.	Meat Roll	3 tins
Cherries	20 lbs.	Bacon	1 tin
Evaporated Milk	45 tins	Stewed Steak	10 tins
Pork Sausages	3 tins	Salmon	11 tins
Meat Soup	4 tins	Minced Beef	2 tins
Jam	4 tins	Herring Paste	12 tins

All condemned foodstuffs which can be used for animal feeding are disposed of for that purpose.

RAT DESTRUCTION.

The work of surveying the District and carrying out treatment of rat infested premises under the special Ministry of Food Scheme was completed in June. Figures below indicate the work carried out: —

Number of Premises inspected	...	...	...	1,910
Number of Infestations treated	...	...	...	153
Estimated total rats killed	...	...	...	1,449

With the completion of this work the Council decided to maintain a service for destruction of rats by sharing the Saffron Walden Borough Council's operator on a 50/50 basis. This service is evidently much appreciated by householders, but confusion has been caused owing to the fact that with the ending of the Special Scheme referred to above the Council is again bound to charge occupiers for work carried out.

Regular treatment was also given to all sewers, disposal works and refuse tips.

GENERAL.

Preliminary action was taken in respect of 31 nuisances and in all but one case the notices were complied with during the year.

26 dwelling houses were treated for eradication of vermin (bugs, fleas, etc.) and the residual action of D.D.T. preparations has proved highly efficacious in ridding premises of these pests; all new council houses are given D.D.T. vapour treatment before occupation commences.

Seasonal influxes of van dwellers engaged in pea picking, potato harvesting, etc., have called for action in a number of cases, but following advice to the people concerned and their employers nuisances caused have been abated.

With the opening of a commercial airport at Stansted during the year the Department was engaged for many hours in dealing with imported food-stuffs and taking the necessary precautions under the Public Health (Aircraft) Regulations.

CONCLUSION.

In comparing this Report with that for the past two years it is noticeable that, whilst much remains to be done, progress has been made throughout the District. This can undoubtedly be attributed to the slow but steady increase of materials and labour available, the awakening of the public interest in matters of hygiene and sanitation and the loyalty and assistance of members of my staff to whom I wish to express my appreciation.

My thanks are also due to the Chairman of the Council, the past and present Chairman of the Public Health Committee, and to members of the Council for their continued confidence, and to the Clerk of the Council, Medical Officer of Health and other colleagues for their co-operation which is greatly appreciated.

I am, Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

A. ARMES,

Senior Sanitary Inspector.

